MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM

NR Eligible: yes

Property Name: Marlborough House
Address: 3001 Branch Avenue (MD 5)
City: Hilcrest Heights, MD
Zip Code: 20748
County: Prince Georges
USGS Quadrangle(s): Anacostia
Property Owner: southern Management Corporation
Tax Account ID Number: 0483792
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): Subn 5480
Tax Map Number: 0079
Project: MD 637-MD 5: Suitland Parkway to Curtis Lane
Agency: FHWA/MD SHA
Preparer's Name: Anne E. Bruder Architectural Historian
Date Prepared: 09/20/2013
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: Eligibility recommended

Criteria: Considerations: A B C D E F G

Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:

Inventory Number: PG:75A-68
Historic district: yes

Site visit by MHT Staff: yes
Name: Date:

Description of Property and Justification: (Please attach map and photo)

Summary:
The Marlborough House is a high rise consisting of the north and south buildings constructed in 1962 and 1965 respectively. Each is eight stories high and joined at the two-story central lobby and by glass enclosed corridors between the two sections in the six stories above the lobby. Another open walkway extends through the two-story lobby at the same level as the second floor. There are 334 individual apartments in the buildings, consisting of studio, one-and-two-bedrooms with balconies or picture windows. A recreation room and a commercial space which is currently used as a convenience store, are in the building's basement. The complex has landscaped grounds with grass, trees and shrubs that surround the parking lot, and a guard house stands at the main entrance of the gated community. An in-ground curved swimming pool is accessible from the recreation room. The building was designed by the architectural firm of Cohen and Haft Associates, Inc. for Jess Fisher and Lovell Minear, two local real estate developers. The two sections of the building are not identical, which makes for varied elevations. Marlborough House is located on the west side of the Suitland Parkway adjacent to the District of Columbia boundary at Southern Avenue. Marlborough House appears to be among the first high rise buildings constructed in Prince George's County, and is an example of the suburban high rise structure built between 1962 through 1965. The building's footprint shows two angled wings attached at the ends of each section so that the curved building entrance is within the two arms of the angle, while the lobby and pool area are defined by the opposing angle. This design makes the building an example of organic or Neo-expressionist architecture, which was popular in

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended Eligibility not recommended

Criteria: Considerations: A B C D E F G

MHT Comments:

Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services Date
Reviewer, National Register Program Date
the early 1960s. It is recommended as eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A (events) as an early example of the use of highrise buildings in the Prince George's County suburbs, and C (architecture) as an example of the work of Cohen and Haft Associates, Inc. in the contemporary/neo-expressionist mode from 1962-1965.

Exterior Description:
The Marlborough House is a multi-family residential complex consisting of two high rise sections with eight stories containing 334 apartments, elevators and stairs, a gatehouse with gates at the main entrance from Branch Avenue, exterior parking lots surrounding the building, landscaped grounds and a fence along the perimeter of the property. An in-ground curved swimming pool surrounded by a concrete deck is also an exterior feature. Both structures are of reinforced concrete clad in buff-colored brick laid in common bond. Apartment buildings are efficient to construct because identical units are stacked on top of one another which allows pipes and wires and other common elements to be continuous throughout. In order to create a varied appearance in the façade however, different combinations of units are evident when comparing the two sections of Marlborough House. Only the larger one-bedroom and two-bedroom units have balconies or picture windows. The other studio and one bedroom units have two smaller windows. However, the balconies and picture windows are sometimes placed to that there are all picture windows or balconies in a stack, or sometimes the there is a picture window on one floor and a balcony on the next. In the units next door, whichever unit has a balcony, the opposite has a picture window. On the exterior, the floors of each level are marked with turquoise enamel panels in the stair towers and the connecting walkways between the two buildings. The metal frame windows in each unit are three-part with two sliding single pane side windows and a fixed center picture window. There are two different sizes of three-part windows, and the larger window extends across an entire bay. This type of picture window has beige enamel panels above and below each window frame, and it is the design feature that can be substituted for the balcony in some of the apartments. The exterior balconies have concrete decks and metal railings that have turquoise fiberglass panels affixed to each. The balconies and picture windows on the top floor of the north section are each shaded by a concrete canopy, but neither the balconies nor the picture windows on the top floor of the south section have this feature. The building is sited to take advantage of the views of the Suitland Parkway to the east and Washington, DC to the west. The Suitland Parkway forms the eastern boundary of the property.

In an aerial view the two buildings make an angle which shelters the projecting bay of the main entrance on the west side of the building. On the east side, the angle’s radiating lines extend beyond the lobby’s projecting bay to enclose the pool area. A neon sign with the Southern Management Company’s logo along with the words "Marlborough House" is attached on the east side of the building above the top walkway. The North Section was constructed between 1962 and 1963 while the south section was constructed in 1964 and opened in 1965.

Apartments:
The two buildings have studio, one-and-two bedroom apartments, and are joined at the center by the lobby and glass enclosed corridors above. There are twenty units on each floor in each building. The apartments contain a living room, dining room, bedroom, bathroom and kitchen if it is one-or-two bedrooms. The entrance through a single door provides access to the living area which separates the bedroom from the kitchen. The galley kitchen in each unit is placed along the interior corridor wall and there is an exterior door in each kitchen leading to the central corridor.[1] Each apartment is carpeted, and the windows have blinds. The studio apartments (or executive suites) are a single room and the kitchen is removed from the corridor wall. The apartments have 598 square feet (studio), 714 square feet (one bedroom), 940 square feet (two bedroom, one bath) or 1008 square feet (two bedroom, two bath). The building is centrally air conditioned and heated and there are communal laundry facilities on each floor. There are elevators in the lobby and spaced along the corridors of each building adjoining the stairs. There are stair towers on the east side of the building which have windows to provide light in the stairwell and exterior stairs at ground level. The one and two bedrooms units are of two types -- with or without exterior balconies. The units without balconies have picture windows. From the exterior of the building one is able to view the how the same unit design of either the two bedroom unit with a balcony or with a

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Date

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Date
picture window could be in the same stack since switching between a window and a door in the exterior would require a minor change in the design of each unit. This design change is evident on the northwest façade.

Corridors:
There are central corridors through the building on each floor for access to each apartment. Each corridor is carpeted, with painted walls and foot-tall wood strips placed in the middle of each wall as a chair rail. Access to the elevators, laundry facilities, and stairs is through the corridors.

Lobby:
At the center of the building is the main entrance that is covered with a semi-circular metal roof supported by two pillars. A curved five-part window wall made up of ten-foot high glass panels has the single glass entrance door. Half of the area covered by the window wall contains the leasing office space, and the other half is the building’s lobby. At the entrance are an L-shaped reception desk and a passage to the open area of the lobby. This open area has a two-story height, and has two banks of mail boxes as well as elevators. There are four pillars supporting the ceiling since the area extends beyond the building’s exterior plane. Furniture in the lobby provides seating with views of the pool deck below and the Suitland Parkway beyond. A concrete and plexiglas walkway supported by columns extends across the lobby at the second story to provide a connection between the two buildings. Like the entrance, the lobby’s east wall is a bowed four-part glass wall made up of two ten-foot high glass panels in each section. The north and south walls are of brick, while the floor has terrazzo panels in a radiating pattern that responds to the curve of the wall. The east glass wall extends to the ground floor on the east side where the recreation room leads to the pool.

Basement:
The ground floor contains the service spaces – tenant storage and a convenience store and the recreation room which leads to the pool. Like the lobby above, the recreation room has two brick walls, and a projecting curved four-part glass window wall that also contains a single glass door to the pool. A fabric awning provides shade to the recreation room entrance. The recreation room has a galley kitchen with a breakfast bar on the northwest side of the room. Additional features include two glass doors for entrance from the central corridor, and pillars for structural support since the glass wall extends beyond the plan of the wall.

Parking Lot/Grounds:
The driveway and parking areas surround the building on the north, east and west sides of the building. Landscaped grounds on the west side contain grass, trees, shrubs and flowers. The curved pool is surrounded by the angled deck – the angle mimics the angle of the terrazzo floor in the lobby with the radiating pattern. On the east side, a fence which encircles the perimeter of the property divides the apartment complex from the Suitland Parkway. A one-story gatehouse that is clad in brick and vinyl siding, has a hipped pyramidal roof clad in asphalt shingles with large windows in each wall is located at the main entrance facing the intersection of Branch Avenue and Southern Avenue.

Significance:
The Marlborough House is an example of a developer building constructed between 1962 and 1965 as part of Prince George's County post-World War II suburban development. High-rise apartment buildings are generally considered urban structures because most are constructed due to the high cost of land and the ability to create a dense residential population in a relatively small area of a city. However, because of Washington, DC’s highly mobile population, developers quickly discovered that smaller parcels of land (generally less than ten acres) could be developed as multistory apartment buildings which would attract singles, couples and other small family groups who did not choose to purchase a suburban house. The developers who constructed the Marlborough House were Jess Fisher and Lovell Minear, based on the design by Jack Cohen and Leonard Haft of Cohen and Haft Associates, Inc. Cohen and Haft provided a design with two wings set at an angle with the circular entrance and lobby at the join of the angle. This design is an example of neo-expressionism or organic contemporary architecture which was used for buildings

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that would not be financed by FHA if they were considered Modern. Marlborough House’s period of significance dates from April 1960 when Fisher and Minear purchased the first parcel through April 1985 when Fisher and Minear’s representatives sold the property to the Southern Management Corporation.

Jess Fisher ran a realty office in Washington, DC and case law records indicate that he owned a number of rental properties in the District of Columbia, which frequently caused litigation, usually stemming from nonpayment of rents. He also owned various commercial properties in the city which he leased to business owners. Minear was the president and treasurer of the Fort Lincoln Cemetery in Bladensburg and became involved in Prince George’s County’s suburban development near Andrews Air Force Base in the mid-1950s. Both Minear and Fisher seem to have been relatively small developers, doing one project a year and moving to the next once the first had been sold or rented. Fisher remained active in residential development in western Prince George’s County until 1989. Minear died in the early 1980s. The Marlborough House seems to have been their only joint venture in apartment building.

In 1960 and 1961, Fisher and Lovell purchased two adjoining parcels totaling 7.5 acres located between the Suitland Parkway’s west boundary and the District of Columbia’s southeast boundary between Branch Avenue and Naylor Road. Fisher and Lovell had already agreed through a Property Covenant that the Marlborough House building would be at least six stories in height. The Marlborough House site was unique in that it was two parcels between the Suitland Parkway, which is a National Park site, and the District of Columbia boundary, which meant that there was limited development potential in any area surrounding the parcel. The two developers turned to a rising architectural firm, Cohen and Haft Associates, Inc. to design the proposed high rise building.

Jack Cohen (1924-2011) and Leonard Haft (1926-1985) studied architecture at Catholic University in Washington, DC and both graduated in 1949. They each worked as draftsmen for other firms for several years following graduation, and Cohen opened his solo practice in 1952. By 1958, they became partners and set up office in Silver Spring. From the beginning their work was for local real estate developers in Washington and the Maryland suburbs. Cohen and Haft completed two apartment projects for local developer L. G. Meltzer at Laurel Park Apartments in Laurel in 1958 and the Wayne-Manchester Apartments in Silver Spring in 1959. Laurel Park is a garden apartment complex, while the Wayne-Manchester Apartments are two separate nine-story buildings surrounded by a parking lot, with balconies and a swimming pool near Rock Creek Park. Another Cohen and Haft project in Prince George’s County for Meltzer was the eight-story Oglethorpe House in Hyattsville which was completed in January 1962. It too has a swimming pool, air conditioning and elevators, and is now a condominium. The two apartment buildings for Meltzer are similar -- high rise buildings with eight and nine stories, with apartments that have either an exterior balcony or a large picture window. Both are actually two buildings but at Oglethorpe the buildings are perpendicular and joined by an interior walkway at each floor, while at Wayne-Manchester, the two buildings are separate, individual structures. The two building-design that Cohen and Haft did for Fisher and Minear shows the growth of their design ideas since Marlborough House’s design is not limited to a simple rectangle, but has curves and angles that are not seen in the earlier designs. The exterior design shows how Cohen and Haft were thinking of their buildings, that the building’s sections did not require a monolithic façade, but could be broken into smaller design modules that would provide visual interest.

Single family residential development was already occurring in Hillcrest Heights on the east side of the Suitland Parkway. Both Hillcrest Heights and Temple Hill were unincorporated areas of Prince George’s County near Washington, DC’s southeast boundary, unlike the incorporated towns on the north side of Washington including Bladensburg, Hyattsville and Mount Ranier. Several federal government installations including the Suitland Federal Center and Andrews Air Force Base had been constructed near Hillcrest Heights and Temple Hills. These new federal centers lead to the residential developments such as Hillcrest Heights which were started by the developer Anthony Carozza in 1946. Carozza was noted for his Colonial Revival house styles. By the 1950s, the Hillcrest Heights developers were beginning to construct semi-detached houses throughout the neighborhood as a
way to increase the residential density, setting the stage for larger multi-family residential development. Some of the attached houses were more contemporary in style, with steeply pitched roofs. Elsewhere in Prince George’s County starting in the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s, residential developers were constructing garden and low-rise (two or three stories tall) apartment buildings in Hyattsville, Bladensburg, College Park and Mount Ranier in order to meet the demands of residents who could not buy single family dwellings.[10] However, high rise buildings were not constructed in the county prior to the late 1950s. In Hillcrest Heights, garden apartment construction started in 1962.

Garden apartments generally consist of multiple buildings with two to four units per story, thus requiring a larger amount of land to support the residential development. The low rise buildings that were constructed in Prince George’s County before and after World War II generally fit into the footprint of two single family residential lots since the building rose several stories. The residential developments in towns near the District’s border offered the ease of public transportation, first by train, and then by streetcar and bus to downtown government facilities. As automobile ownership increased, the suburban residential developments made access to outlying government facilities such as the Suitland Federal Center and Andrews Air Force Base and the Goddard Space Flight Center convenient. In particular the growth of Andrews Air Force Base in the mid-1950s influenced the residential development of the areas surrounding the base near Washington’s southeast boundary. Generally more houses were being constructed in the County than any type of apartments, but high rise buildings effectively provided the same number of units as a garden complex, but with multiple stories on a small lot of land. However, the multi-family complexes attracted a mix of singles, couples and small family groups who did not choose to purchase a house, but did seek a suburban lifestyle.

Like other architects in the Maryland suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s, Cohen and Haft avoided using the term "Modern" when describing their buildings and instead called them "contemporary" because "Modern' designs would not receive Federal Housing Administration (FHA) financing. In a 1963 interview, Cohen placed his firm in the 'organic school of contemporary architecture.'[11] At the time, the noted Modern architects who were using organic or Neo-expressionist forms included Le Corbusier at Ronchamp and Saarinen at the TWA Terminal at Kennedy Airport in New York. Locally, Charles Goodman used rounded forms in some of his River Park buildings in Washington’s Southwest Redevelopment Area. The placement of the Marlborough House’s two wings at an angle along with the semi-circular entrance and lobby and the continuation of the angle on the pool deck make the building an example of Neo-expressionism. The use of color panels to emphasize certain elements of the design is usually associated with the Formalist strain of the Modern movement, such as Edward Durrell Stone and local Washington architect, Arthur L. Anderson, from the early 1960s.

Cohen and Haft remained active in Washington D.C.’s suburban development through the mid-1980s, contributing designs for apartment buildings, both garden and high rise, and single family dwellings and land planning for various projects including Tyson’s Corner and Reston in Virginia as well as Columbia, Maryland, and single family dwellings in Crest Park in the Hillandale area of Silver Spring. Most of their work was in Montgomery County, but they won an award from the AIA Potomac Valley Chapter for their garden apartment design at Spring Hill Lake in Greenbelt in 1964.

Marlborough House represents a new building design for the Maryland suburbs in Prince George’s County. Throughout Prince George’s County, developers were just beginning to construct high rise buildings such as Cohen-Haft’s Ogletorpe House in Hyattsville (1959), Plaza Towers, part of Edward Durell Stone’s New Town Center in Hyattsville (1964), and Kenilworth Towers in Bladensburg (1965). Construction of high rise buildings in these incorporated towns occurred in response to the needs of Washington’s mobile middle class. Washington-area developers, including Fisher and Minear, learned quickly that their tenants had sophisticated expectations about their suburban lifestyle. Appealing amenities such as those found at the Marlborough House, including free and ample parking, a swimming pool, central heating and air conditioning, well equipped kitchens and laundry facilities along with an attractive lobby and landscaped grounds, provided a degree of luxury that was not easily attained by residents who were unable to buy a house but could choose an apartment that could be leased for a set term. The tenants at

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Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services  Date

Reviewer, National Register Program  Date
Marlborough House were able to have an art show which Jess Fisher sponsored during a week-long show of the work of California artist Ronald S. Keyes at Marlborough House in 1968.[13] Furthermore, the apartment building construction occurring in incorporated towns on the north side of Washington, DC occurred because of the ready access to public transportation to downtown business and government offices.

At the time of the Marlborough House’s construction in 1962, there were no other high rise buildings in Hillcrest Heights or Temple Hills. Starting in 1963, however, several developers in Hillcrest Heights used some smaller lots to construct high rise buildings at 4431 23rd Parkway (1964), 3162 Good Hope Avenue (1967), 3200 Curtis Drive (1967) and Iverson Towers at 4301 23rd Parkway (1967). Like the Marlborough House, most of the buildings had pools and parking lots as well as balconies, which helped to sell the buildings to prospective tenants looking for 'gracious living in a country club setting,' which the Marlborough House first provided to the area.

The Marlborough House retains integrity of design, workmanship, feeling and association.

Based on the forgoing information, SHA has determined that the Marlborough House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (events) as an example of high rise apartment building construction in the Washington, DC suburbs of Prince George’s County between 1962 and 1967, and Criterion C (architecture) as an example of the work of Cohen and Haft Associates, Inc. from 1962 through 1965. Real estate developers quickly determined that high rise buildings appealed to Washington’s mobile middle class residents who sought some of the amenities being offered to single family homeowners in nearby suburbs. But a certain portion of the population was unable or unwilling to purchase a house and renting an apartment provided some of the luxuries that they desired. Additional research did not identify associations with persons of local, state or national significance and Marlborough House is not eligible for inclusion in the NRHP under Criterion B (persons). NRHP Criterion D was not included as part of this study.

The boundary for the Marlborough House is confined to Prince George’s County Tax Map 79, Subdivision 5480 and consists of 7.5 acres.

Sources Consulted
Boldt, David R., "The Architect of Suburbia, He is not Proud," The Washington Post, December 11, 1972, PA1
Cherry-Tate, Valerie, Marlborough House Property Manager, personal communications September 11, and 20, 2013.

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Eligibility recommended ________ Eligibility not recommended ________

Criteria: A B C D Considerations: A B C D E F G

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1. James M. Goode in "Best Addresses A Century of Washington's Distinguished Apartment Houses" notes that in the 1920s, exterior doors in apartment kitchens were provided so that the janitor would have access to remove the trash (Goode, 189).

2. Valerie Cherry-Tate, Marlborough House Property Manager, personal communications September 11, and 20, 2013.

3. Prince George’s County Land Records, Deeds at Liber 2548, Folio 103 dated December 20, 1960; Liber 2548, Folio 118, dated April 18, 1961 and Liber 2632, Folio 236, dated ________.

4. Prince George’s County Land Records, Liber 2632, Folio 236, accessed through http://mdlandrec.net/msa/, September 18, 2013. Fisher appears to have frequently taken his tenants to court for nonpayment of their rents.

5. Within Washington DC on Branch Avenue near the boundary, residential development with large single family dwellings had already occurred.


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Reviewer, National Register Program                              Date
m, accessed October 12, 2012.

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Eligibility recommended       Eligibility not recommended

Criteria:  A   B   C   D    Considerations:  A   B   C   D   E   F   G

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Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services  Date

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Reviewer, National Register Program  Date
Marlborough House, PG:75A-68 Photographs

PG;75A-68_2013-09-11_01.tif North Building west façade looking north

PG;75A-68_2013-09-11_02.tif South Building west façade looking south
Main entrance looking northeast

East elevation looking west at pool deck, lobby, corridors and Marlborough House sign
PG;75A-68_2013-09-11_05.tif South Building east elevation looking south

PG;75A-68_2013-09-11_06.tif South Building east elevation stair tower looking west
PG;75A-68_2013-09-11_11.tif  East parking lot and landscaping looking south

PG;75A-68_2013-09-11_12.tif  Gatehouse looking south
Lobby looking east at hexagonal windows

Lobby looking west towards main entrance
Lobby looking southeast at mailboxes

Lobby looking south at crosswalk/balcony over lobby
Club Room looking southeast